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UNCLAS TAIPEI 003969

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/RSP/TC, EAP/PA, EAP/PD -
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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: TAIWAN'S LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS

A) "U.S. Words Matter in Taiwan"

The conservative, pro-unification English-language
"China Post" editorialized (12/14):

"The surprise outcome of Saturday's legislative elections, blocking the pro-independence President Chen Shui-bian's bid to control the legislature, is a relief for Beijing, Washington and Taiwan's neighbors. .

"It is easy to conclude that the results were 'an upset win for the opposition,' 'a setback for Chen' and 'most people favor status quo.' And it is also convenient to say that under Chen's dictatorship, the green group's campaign obviously had overplayed its hand, ignoring the people's wishes for stability and harmony and pushing more boldly its anti-China platforms.

"But the electorate's support for the blue group could not have increased if Washington had not sent timely and blunt warnings against Chen's provocative rhetoric.
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"Obviously, voters chose to heed America's caution and not to rewrite history. Polls show 2.2 million voters who had supported his re-election bid in March changed their minds or simply stayed away from the ballot box. But the opposition's majority of two is too slim to check the all-powerful presidential office, promising prolonged political instability.

"Cross-strait peace will depend on Washington restraining Taipei, Beijing being less assertive, and on the prudence of Taiwan's people who already have freedom and de facto independence and apparently aren't willing to gamble for de jure independence merely as a gesture of defiance."

B) "New Poll Deals Chen a Serious Blow"

Osman Tseng of the conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" noted (12/13):

"The results of the just ended Saturday legislative election delivered many important messages. Among them is a revelation that proves to us incorrect a current widely held perception: The ideology of independence, or Taiwanese nationalism, has acquired such widespread popular support that it now has become the mainstream political faith in Taiwan. .

"That a greater portion of the voters chose to support the pro-status quo 'pan-blue' suggests that these people, instead of backing the independence cause, prefer to see Taiwan continuing to preserve its current political standing. .

"With a renewed mandate, the opposition alliance could provide stronger checks on the Chen administration, necessitated by the fact that the government team has become increasingly unresponsive. .

"The Saturday legislative poll in a sense was a no-confidence against Chen. . The refusal of the voters to answer to Chen's calls and give him control of the lawmaking body was a serious blow to him. Without the backing of the legislature, it would become even more difficult, if not impossible, for him to enact a new Constitution by a referendum. His recently launched name-rectification plan and the broader de-sinicization campaign being carried out by his administration can be expected to face even stronger objections from the re-elected Legislature, to be installed in February. ."

KEEGAN